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Bayard's Courier

A Story of Love and Adventure in the Cavalry Campaigns.

By B. K. BENSON.

Author of "Who Goes There?" "A Friend With the Countess," etc.

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CHAPTER VIII.

HOW TO GET A HORSE.

"Why then, tonight,
let us assay our plot; which, if it speed,
is wicked meaning in a lawful deed."
—Shakespeare.

Joe Lewis's recovery was slow. A pistol
ball had lodged in his side, and it was
thought best to let it alone. He languished
in the hospital at Calverley.

Dan Morgan's acquaintance with
Armstrong became intimate. It is not to
be doubted that from the first Charley had
suspected that he was indebted to Lucy
for the abundant good-will shown him by
the young cavalryman, and that he was
reasonable to question Armstrong's pleasure
in knowing that she had attracted this
additional contestant for the prize of her
partiality, seeing that Morgan was in every
way eligible; yet the relationship
which exists between a beauty's brother
and a beauty's sister, especially prior to
the beauty's acceptance, is somewhat delicate
in Virginia, and spite of the fact that
Morgan was a man of good standing and
a beautiful character, and that his
unpromising desires were the cause
of a peculiar and not unbecoming restraint
on the part of both men. Though you
wish to get rid of your sister, you do not
publish your desire; and even when you
are neutral between parties to the delicate
warfare preliminary to matrimony or escape,
you wish to maintain your neutrality
unimpaired and unquestioned, and you
resent with native dignity even a tacit
suggestion looking to your alliance with
the aggressor. So, too, on the other hand,
if your fair enemy claims your friend and
her brother, you are bound, by every force
of circumstances, to let your action and
your words make plain to this friend and
brother that you are the embodiment of
wisdom and virtue; that you are a man
discreetly, considerably, humanely. Perhaps
the intimacy between Armstrong and
Morgan was not the worse because it
lacked the roistering, contentiousness of
those who seek no man's sister and have
none to bestow; perhaps it was not less
cordial because it lacked contemptuous
familiarity; perhaps it did no harm to the
principal or to the intended spouse; but
almost unconsciously either desired to exhibit
only those qualities which men admire,
and to suppress language and feeling
indecorous and unbecomingly hypocritical
self is a confession that virtue is admirable,
and our men were not hypocrites—
one was a man responsive to the mute
appeal of an honest heart; the other was
merely a novice in the long art of love.

The Confederate infantry were encamped
on the plains of Manassas, with
advanced posts at Centerville. Stuart's
cavalry occupied Fairfax Court House and
scouting sometimes as far as Munson's
Hill. Subsequent to the affair of Lewinsville,
there was no great activity, so that
Morgan had little trouble in getting leave
of absence for an afternoon, and he was
excused to his worship of Lucy Armstrong
through the medium of her martial
representative.

"You ought to be in the cavalry," said
Dan one day.

"Wish I was; I'd prefer it greatly."
"Why did you go into the infantry?"

"Well, I wouldn't tell everybody the
reason, but I'll tell you; it was just
because it was cheaper."

Morgan did not like the reply. It was
but another party or thrust in their fence;
he felt notice served upon him that
Lucy was not to be considered a rich
inheritance.

"But you get pay for the use of your
horse."

"Yes; but the horse?"

Morgan was silent; could he ask
whether a horse more or fewer would
make a difference on the homestead?

Charley relapsed into silence.

"Of course, that would give me the best
horse on the place, but my dear fellow,
my upper lip wouldn't allow it."

Dan asked to tell Charley that horses
were numerous on a certain establishment
in Augusta County and that it
would be a joy to send for the finest, yet
know it impossible to make such offer.

"It is easy enough to get a transfer,"
said he, alluding to changes from one
arm of the service to another.

"Yes; and if everything was as I wish,
I'd be glad enough to change."

Dan felt inspired. "Charley," he
exclaimed, "I'll tell you what we'll do! Let's
catch a horse for you from the Yankees!"

"But you'd be compelled to turn him
over to the Quartermaster, and I'd get
no good of it."

"I know! But what I'm thinking of
is different. We'd catch him on our own
time. Each get leave of absence for a
day. Nobody must know anything about it."

Dan showed excitement; Armstrong
was gloomy.

"What's the matter with you now?"

"You don't suppose I'm going to consent
to your risking your life in order to get
me a horse?"

"What could Morgan say? His foe was
fully intrenched in the flank, and was
enterprising exhibited by his men, and was
nothing loath to abet the irregular method
by which Morgan proposed to add a good
man to the brigade. He gave Morgan
information concerning the Union pickets.
The conspiracy required simultaneous
leaves of absence for the two men, and
this was not easy to manage; two or three
weeks west by Dan refusing to ask the
slightest favor from his officers until
Armstrong should give the word. At last
he received a note from Charley, and he
boldly went to his Captain and begged
for two days, to begin on the morrow.

"What for?" asked the captain; "it
must be a pretty strong reason that makes

you ask for two days; won't one day do
you?"

"I think not, sir; truth is, Captain, that
I am trying to get a good man to join the
company, and I hope to succeed."

"Ah! If that be the case, Morgan, you
may go; good luck to you!"

The attempt was to be made afoot, and

you ask for two days; won't one day do
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you?"

"Whereabouts on Back Lick is our
post?"

The post is at Back Lick Church; how
far they picked their way and left I don't
know."

Dan paid for the supper. When they
left they started back toward the turn-
pike, but soon they changed their course.

"You know where that church is?"
asked Armstrong.

"Yes; right at the railroad, about three
miles from here—perhaps not so far
afoot."

"Lead on, then."

"But I'm going around 'em," said Dan.

"I'm not going to any Back Lick Church
on this occasion."

"To the right or left?"

"I think I'll try the left. You see, there
is no use in going to the right unless we
want to get around all our line, and we
know that our post at the church is far
from our extreme right. We'll save time
and trouble by going straight ahead."

They were the angle made by the
turnpike and railroad, which here are
nearly three miles apart and which meet
at Alexandria, nine miles east. Dan did
not believe that there would be a cavalry
picket-post between the turnpike and the
railroad. Of course, the space would be
watched by patrols, but he was not great-
ly troubled on that account. He had
been able to follow Federal overcoats
under which each concealed a rifle strapped
to his waist, and one of Morgan's pistols,
the only arms they chose to carry.

A tramp of at least 12 miles was before
them, for they must make crooks and
turns to get around their own pickets and
to circumvent their enemies afterward.

The way was nearly due east, and until
they should almost reach Annandale they
need have no fear, but just beyond that
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their enterprise be interrupted by Confeder-
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